

Ways to Lower Food Costs in School Nutrition Programs

- Estimate quantity purchases over time to increase economies of scale bid pricing.
- Set a goal for managing food costs. Allocate a percentage for food costs of total revenue.
- Monitor and calculate meal costs on a regular basis.
- Use standardized recipes.
- Pre-cost and post-cost menus to ensure food items are within predetermined costs levels.
- Use cycle menus.
- Reduce plate waste by analyzing reasons for discarded foods.
- Use portion control tools to ensure accurate serving sizes of menu items.
- Avoid overproduction of food by careful forecasting. Consider the weather, school activities, and short-day schedules for students.
- Calculate kitchen waste and account for why it happened.
- Review production records on a regular basis.
- Manage the purchase of food items through bids.
- Keep specialized purchases to a minimum.
- Maintain inventory control.
- Prohibit the removal of food items from the premises. Do not allow “leftovers” to be taken home; this is an illegal practice.
- Follow receiving and storage procedures to minimize shortages.
- Decrease food costs through use of USDA Foods.
- Implement security measures. Product theft can cause major increase in food costs.